



Report of External Evaluation and Review

Vertical Horizonz Industry Training
Group Limited

Date of report: 2 March 2010

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Brief description of TEO	3
Executive Summary	4
Basis for External Evaluation and Review	6
Findings	7
Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation	7
Part 2: Performance in focus areas	15
Statements of Confidence	17
Actions Required and Recommendations.....	18

MoE Number: 8199
NZQA Reference: C00031
Date of EER visit: 16-18 November 2009

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Brief description of TEO

Location: Tauranga

Type: Private Training Establishment

Size: Approximately 8000 enrolments

Sites: Training sites at Tauranga and Wiri. Also delivers at client premises nationwide.

Vertical Horizonz Group (VHG) was registered as a private training establishment with NZQA in 1998. It currently offers at least 70 short courses, of one to two days in length. Courses focus on workplace health and safety and are in the disciplines of height and confined spaces, first aid, transport, and professional development.

The majority of courses are unit standards based and can lead to the National Certificate in Business (First Line Management) (Level 3) and the National Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety (Workplace Safety) (Level 3). In addition to core business VHG also provides consultancy and management support on an as-needs basis in areas such as employment relations, quality management, hazardous substances and new organisms (HSNO) handling, and manual handling and hearing loss courses.

VHG clients range from small, one-course provision to multi-course, multi-site provision delivered at its two training sites or nationwide at client company premises. VHG has also registered a training organisation in Australia to provide similar training and comparable services. Of added value is the opportunity to extend training to Australia to those companies operating in both countries, and to share resources and benchmark outcomes.

VHG's previous quality audit with NZQA resulted in all requirements being met under the standard in force at the time.

Executive Summary

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Vertical Horizonz Industry Training Group Limited.

Key reasons for this are:

- Course completion and achievement are consistently at the 90 percentile, endorsed by positive external moderation reports. The achievement rates are excellent for these short courses.
- Training is tailored to client need, incorporates client standards of practice, and is delivered where possible at client premises. In addition, VHG has two purpose-refurbished training sites (transport, and height and confined space respectively). There is clearly good identification of client needs, VHG is highly responsive to those needs, and there was ample evidence that those needs are being met.
- Skilled and qualified staff are available for training nationwide and in Australia. The management team are also trainers, ensuring they experience first-hand all processes of delivery, assessment, and feedback. These sound management decisions contribute to good outcomes.
- There was evidence that VHG provides quality training, as shown by return business, analyses of client feedback, and growth in the client base. The review team saw how VHG used this feedback to improve safe practice in the workplace, an outcome sought by VHG, its clients, and trainees.
- Evidence was provided that staff are valued and that their input into improvements in processes and delivery is appreciated. Examples were sighted of how each of the different staff groups, (administration, trainers, contractors, governance and management) contributed collectively to the valued outcomes of course achievement and workplace safety awareness and practice.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **highly confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Vertical Horizonz Industry Training Group Limited.

Key reasons for this are:

- On completion, each course is evaluated by trainee and trainer through the trainer project activity reports (PARs). In addition, programme managers and management seek feedback directly from the client. These activities show VHG's commitment to improving practice to increase outcomes.

- Robust process and practices are in place, with opportunities for formal and informal review through discussions and quality improvement requests (QIRs) by all staff.
- Ample evidence was provided both by VHG and clients interviewed of feedback opportunities and action taken to improve practice following feedback, such as the request to use photographs to better demonstrate safe practice. This helped the trainees' understanding, and increased achievement.
- Clear evidence was provided of the holistic organisational approach taken by VHG, from the initial enquiry call through to the feedback provided to and from the client post-course. Administration staff knowledgeable in one discipline, for example height safety, are now trained in all disciplines to better inform clients and trainees about course choices.
- Additional expertise is contracted to provide objective monitoring of assessment and moderation and internal audit of processes and practices. As management are also trainers this external quality assurance gives VHG confidence that all practices and processes are consistent and effective.

TEO response

Confirmation form signed in the affirmative.

Basis for External Evaluation and Review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of course approval and accreditation (under sections 258 and 259 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the course approval and accreditation criteria and policies established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual courses they own or provide. These criteria and policies are set by NZQA under section 253(1)(ca) of the Act.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring TEOs continue to comply with the policies and criteria after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of courses and/or registration. The Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) is responsible, under delegated authority from NZQA, for compliance by the polytechnic sector, and the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the policies and criteria approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Findings

The conclusions in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/keydocs/index.html>

Outline of scope

The scope for the external evaluation and review included four short courses from two disciplines and a mandatory focus area. Specifically these were:

- Transport (forklift and all terrain vehicles)
- Height and confined space safety (fall arrest and confined space hazards)
- Governance, management, and strategy.

Part 1: Answers to Key Evaluation Questions across the organisation

This section provides a picture of the TEO's performance in terms of the outcomes achieved and the key contributing processes. Performance judgements are based on the answers to key evaluation questions across the focus areas sampled. This section also provides a judgement about the extent to which the organisation uses self-assessment information to understand its own performance and bring about improvements, i.e. capability in self-assessment.

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

Vertical Horizonz Group (VHG) provides industry-based short courses in the disciplines of height and confined spaces, first aid, transport, and professional development. Courses are one to two days long and are offered at VHG's two training sites or at client companies' premises nationwide. Transport (forklift and all terrain vehicles) and height and confined space safety (fall arrest and confined space hazards) were the focus areas selected for this external evaluation and review. Trainees are employees of clients.

VHG's focus on providing quality training to clients is "to keep people safe".

Explanation

VHG focuses on quality delivery, and its expectation is that if this is done well, high achievement will be among the course outcomes. Management and teaching staff consider this quality delivery rationale will ensure client requirements are addressed as well as those of the industry and trainees. The results endorse this rationale as achievements are consistently high. Focus area course outcomes ranged from 96 to 100 per cent, which are excellent results for these unit standards based short courses. External assessment moderation results show these unit standards meeting the national standard. Further, those trainees who are assessed not yet competent at the end of the course are given additional support and reassessment opportunities at no additional cost to the client.

Where practicable, training is offered in the client workplace to provide real and relevant work environments. This ensures that training is in context and relevant to the trainee and the client group. Trainees use the same equipment in the training situation as they use on the job.

As safety is a driver of its training, VHG ensures that its self-review practices continually monitor delivery. Each course is evaluated by trainee and trainer informally through discussion and formally through PARs. Evaluative comments are compiled by administrative staff and communicated to management for discussion and action. Clients are contacted by programme coordinators and management to seek further input. Examples were provided by clients to the review team of VHG response to feedback. One such example was where achievement certificates sent directly to the trainees by mail were not received. VHG now sends both the trainee and employer client duplicate certificates to mitigate lost certificates due to changes of address or any other reason. Teaching materials identified as having difficult text were reviewed, and trainee-friendly text and photographs are now used to clarify and simplify learning materials. These are examples of VHG responding to feedback, whether or not the concerns were considered significant. The responses are valued by trainees and clients.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

VHG works closely with client companies and organisations to ensure that the training is relevant and client focussed. Pre-site visits and course discussions are used to ensure that VHG is clear about client expectations and trainee needs.

Courses are contracted through client professional development and training plans, and also following work incidents.

VHG's mission is "adding value to industry through training excellence", a statement that was supported by clients interviewed who said, "VHG goes the extra mile" to do a good job and VHG "works outside the box" to give quality training.

Explanation

Pre-course on-site visits and discussions with clients provide the scope for tailored training and assessment. In some situations advice provided by VHG led to additional safety measures not initially considered by the client, and these were appreciated and incorporated into the training plan. An example was a request for training in confined spaces (drains). VHG noted that incidents arose in transporting equipment to and from the job. The training plan was extended to include transport safety. This increased the value of the training and outcomes to the client.

Trainers incorporate standard operational practice into the course along with up-to-date legislative requirements. Clients interviewed by the review team appreciated the reciprocal discussions with VHG staff, which kept them abreast of health and safety legislative changes and requirements.

The review team heard from a client that the quality of service delivered by VHG had led to them extending their training contract from one trial course to seven different courses. This client further noted that two of its contractors also now use VHG.

Another client interviewed by the review team noted the increased awareness and knowledge, responsibility, and accountability of employees. Others spoke of their confidence in the training, and supervisors noted that less time was spent on monitoring and a greater focus placed on the actual work. Both trainers and clients spoke of the importance of quality training and the ability to “sleep at night” knowing quality training had been provided.

The provision of training on behalf of industry training organisations attests to the confidence these industry standard-setters have in VHG delivery. The success of a pilot course on leadership in partnership with an ITO is under discussion for a nationwide roll-out.

Client reviews and the feedback provided to and from VHG show how well expectations are being met and opportunities provided to discuss improvements. Clients noted the different avenues that VHG uses to seek input and the timeliness of any response and actions. The result is improved outcomes.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

VHG delivers training for a varied range of clients. They include one-course clients through to national standard-setting industry training organisations and larger nationwide companies and organisations.

Client requirements and expectations are clearly discussed and agreed pre-course. These discussions include trainee requirements. Trainee input is sought for inclusion in training plans. Client standards of practice are also incorporated into training plans.

VHG provides clients and trainees with feedback mechanisms to ensure any opportunities for improvement are accessed.

Explanation

VHG works closely with client companies and organisations to ensure that the training is relevant and client focussed. Pre-site visits and course discussions ensure that VHG is clear about client company expectations and trainee needs. Trainers and trainees are viewed as active training partners. Trainees are involved in the initial pre-course discussions to ensure that the trainer has all relevant information required to tailor the courses. Training is conducted where possible at client premises, using equipment that trainees use on the job. Client standards of practice and culture are incorporated into training plans. VHG views this attention to client and trainee needs as a critical factor in developing successful training plans and implementing them to achieve improved outcomes.

Formal and informal evaluations post-course ensure that any feedback requiring action is done so in a timely manner. Ample evidence was provided through interviews with VHG staff, responses to PARs, monthly management reports, and client interviews to show that feedback is acted on and reported back to clients in a timely manner. Clients noted that even small, seemingly insignificant matters are followed up by VHG, endorsing the VHG ethos that all client matters are important and must be addressed.

The examples of return business, substantial growth in course offerings, and growth in new clients attest to high satisfaction with VHG training. VHG self-assessment shows that VHG is meeting client and trainee needs and achieving outcomes.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

VHG has a number of skilled and qualified trainers on staff complemented by contracted trainers. All trainers have been through a robust selection and induction process. Management, including the managing director, are also trainers. Trainer and trainee groups are matched to ensure best possible outcomes.

Trainers and trainees provide feedback on delivery through the evaluative PARs. All staff can submit quality improvement requests (QIRs) to improve processes and practices.

Ongoing professional development is encouraged and supported by VHG.

VHG has reviewed its assessment and moderation practices to strengthen consistency of delivery and assessment.

Explanation

VHG employs highly skilled and qualified staff whose robust induction includes at least five opportunities to observe peer trainers, engage in team teaching and be observed delivering training. This selection and induction process ensures that VHG is fully confident in its trainers when they are offered contracts. VHG has designed and delivers a “train the trainer” adult teaching course providing professional development opportunities in-house.

VHG management are also skilled and experienced trainers. Their expertise continues to be used in training. Management keep abreast of training needs and pressures, are knowledgeable of the training materials, and network first-hand with client liaison staff as well as client management. VHG is aware of and appreciates the important role trainers have in meeting client needs and trainee achievements.

The PARs provide feedback on delivery and course materials after each course. All staff can use these feedback forms or the QIRs if there are any other areas they feel need improvement. QIRs are submitted to management meetings and are used to request changes to policies and practices. Any short-term or immediate issues are expected to be acted on immediately. The review team was provided with examples by each of the groups interviewed of areas identified for discussion and actions taken. The review team was impressed by a work environment that nurtured an organisation-wide ethos that if something is amiss, “fix it” immediately. Where a client voiced disappointment with a small component of the course, VHG delivered the full course again by a different trainer at no cost to the client. Administration staff follow up immediately on incomplete post-course delivery documentation regardless of whether it is a trainer or manager so that trainees are not disadvantaged. The result is collective staff responsibility and accountability.

Courses are practical. Even the one-day theory courses have a practical component or are exemplified in practice to better facilitate learning and application.

Teaching packages are professionally produced and constantly reviewed by trainers and trainees and adapted or changed where required. The academic director also reviews for user-friendly teaching material, for example use of photographs to better portray process or safety practice. The review team agree that the presentation and substance of the teaching resources were excellent. Well-resourced teaching technology equipment supplements teaching packages and quality training equipment at the two VHG training sites.

Clients interviewed commented on the “quality, relevancy and currency” of training. VHG clients expect consistency of delivery. Annual workshops for specific disciplines such as transport and biannual whole-of-organisation workshops supplement trainer, trainee, and client input into delivery and assessment materials. These activities increase consistency of delivery whether VHG is delivering all training by one trainer nationwide or drawing from its full complement of staff.

A review of assessment and moderation practices led to the recruitment of an academic director to monitor assessment and moderation processes. In addition, an industry training organisation (ITO) moderator was contracted to internally moderate assessments to ensure

they are at national standard. These actions provide VHG with additional confidence that delivery is consistent and assessments are at the national standard.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

Trainees self-identify areas that require support before and during the course. Support is provided to trainees on an as-needs basis. All staff are trained to give prompt and accurate information to trainees and clients.

Course numbers are limited to ensure one-to-one help. Reassessments are provided at no cost to the trainee or client company.

Teaching materials are tailored to meet trainee needs.

Explanation

At the pre-course discussion trainers are alerted to areas where trainees may require support. Learner guides and pre-course preparatory material are provided so that trainees come to the course with the same base knowledge. Trainers even use the enrolment process to identify the teaching style required. Teaching packages have been reviewed and edited where possible to be trainee-language friendly. This includes making legislative information easier to understand. All these actions increase outcomes.

VHG uses a number of strategies to ensure trainees are well supported prior, during, and after training. These strategies include literacy and numeracy support, peer teaching, and encouragement of first-language use for explanation and providing translations. Professional development workshops help trainers to identify mechanisms trainees use to hide learning difficulties, and help to address these. VHG also use practical demonstrations and practice to assist learning. These strategies help the trainer connect with the disengaged trainee and reduce barriers to learning.

One-to-one assessments include mixed-mode verbal, written, and practical opportunities to demonstrate knowledge. Trainees not yet competent at the end of the course are offered reassessment opportunities at no additional cost to the trainee or client company. These are scheduled when trainees have completed additional practice, have extra tuition, and are ready to attempt assessments. This assistance increased trainee achievement outcomes.

VHG has introduced a competency card for trainees which promotes and celebrates success. The card (size of a credit card) details unit standards achieved by the trainee and the date achieved, giving recognition to trainee attainment.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

Context

The managing director and his management team have reviewed the vision, mission, values, and special character of VHG.

VHG's goal of being the preferred provider in its field drives the continual improvement environment promoted.

Management, including the managing director, are also trainers. The managing director and management are members of national safety associations.

Management encourage innovative opportunities to extend training.

Explanation

Management and staff have successfully implemented the reviewed mission and principles of VHG. The review was designed to improve practice and outcomes, and examples of success were provided by each group interviewed by the review team.

VHG identified the importance of its quality management system, of which self-assessment is an integral part, and how staff "walk the talk" of continuous improvement. Processes and practices are known to all staff, implemented and open to review to ensure they are always effective. Comment is encouraged through informal discussion and the QIR process. Examples were given where QIR actions led to improvement in delivery and training outcomes.

Clients include industry training organisations (national industry standards-setting bodies) and large nationwide companies and organisations; delivery is nationwide. Because VHG's drive is to be the provider of choice, it continually reviews its practices, ensures training exceeds the minimum standard of unit standards, and seeks feedback from trainees and clients after each course to continue to meet client requirements. Return business and new client growth attest to the high client satisfaction. Clients interviewed by the review team described how they have contracted more courses to be delivered by VHG due to high satisfaction. They also made comments such as "[there is] not another company that offers [such a] great all-round package", and "our preferred provider for a number of courses", confirming satisfaction with delivery and outcomes.

Annual workshops provide VHG with the opportunity to bring all trainers together for collective training and review. Individual professional development is encouraged and supported by VHG. Staff commented positively in the self-assessment PARs in the well-resourced teaching packages and equipment provided.

VHG commissioned a computer network upgrade to ensure its database keeps abreast of company growth and can produce relevant reports and trends. Data and reports are used in progress reports and strategic planning.

The review team heard many examples of how the organisation used its review systems to drive improvements. Clients interviewed endorsed these feedback opportunities and the timeliness of action and follow-up by VHG staff.

Monthly management reports against eight objectives ensure managers are focussed on VHG performance indicators, ensuring all business relates to successful achievement against VHG goals and targets.

In addition to the employment of skilled teaching staff, VHG has employed an academic director to review teaching packages and assessments, an external internal moderator, and an internal auditor. These appointments are in addition to the quality assurance processes already in place and attest to the responsibility and ownership VHG takes for its own self-assessment in business practice continually meeting its performance targets.

A recent example of review and action was the restructure of administration staff placement. The restructure involved moving administration staff around the different disciplines (transport, first aid, height and confined space, and professional development) so all administration staff know all operations. This has strengthened the knowledge base of administration staff, who are first contact staff to clients, and was commented on by clients interviewed: “those administrative staff are gold”.

The company is open to innovative opportunities for new training. A new pilot programme in partnership with an industry training organisation implementing training for Māori leadership in industry has been successfully completed. It is being reviewed with the intention of extended delivery nationwide. Such initiatives are encouraged, although the review team observed that while innovation was welcomed, a business case was also presented to ensure business viability.

Part 2: Performance in focus areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus areas: Transport

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

Context

The courses are tailored to client needs, have consistently high achievement rates, and clients and trainee are highly satisfied with training received.

Explanation

Each course is tailored to client specifications and expectations. This ensures that each client's needs are addressed. In addition, course outcomes report achievement as consistently rating in the 90 percentile, providing a high level of success for trainees. Refer *Key Evaluation Questions 1.1-1.6*.

VHG has robust self-assessment processes in place. There was ample evidence that these self assessment processes lead to improvement in client satisfaction, delivery, and outcomes. Refer *Key Evaluation Questions 1.1-1.6*

2.2 Focus areas: Height and confined spaces

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

For information on this focus area, see 2.1 *Transport*.

2.3 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

Context

VHG has a strong management team in place with complementary strengths. The organisation employs skilled and well qualified staff. External expertise is contracted to complement current staff and provide additional external quality assurance. Trainers report that courses are well resourced. Innovative and new training opportunities are encouraged. Return business and the growth in new client numbers show expansion in delivery. A robust self-assessment process is practised.

Explanation

VHG's management style is inclusive of all staff. Responsibility and accountability are encouraged and practised by all staff. The organisation is well known in the industry. The managing director is the secretary of the Height Safety Association and actively promotes the improvement of safety standards. His involvement brings another level of networking and interaction to this industry. VHG's attention to meeting client needs and high trainee achievement has led to return business and new client growth.

Refer *Key Evaluation Questions* 1.1-1.6 for more information on governance.

Robust self-assessment processes are implemented and practised. External expertise is contracted to complement current staff and provide additional external quality assurance in the areas of assessment and moderation and internal audit. The self-assessment model in place provides VHG with an assurance that it is continually reviewing its practices to better meet client expectations.

For more information refer to 1.6 *How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?*

Statements of Confidence

The statements of confidence are derived from the findings within and across the focus areas. A four-step scale is used: highly confident, confident, not yet confident, not confident.

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **highly confident** in the educational performance of Vertical Horizonz Industry Training Group Limited.

- Course completion and achievement consistently in the 90 percentile.
- Training is tailored to client need, incorporates client standards of practice, and is delivered where possible at client premises. In addition, VHG has two purpose-refurbished training sites (transport, and height and confined space respectively).
- Skilled and qualified staff are available for training nationwide and in Australia. Management are also trainers, ensuring they experience first-hand all processes of delivery.
- There was evidence that VHG provides excellence and quality training through client feedback, return business, and growth in the client base. VHG's focus on quality training ensures that health and safety are the motivators, and it sets delivery beyond the minimum unit standard requirements and achievements.
- Evidence was provided that staff are valued, and input leading to improvement in processes and delivery was appreciated.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **highly confident** in the capability in self-assessment of Vertical Horizonz Industry Training Group Limited.

- On completion, each course is evaluated by trainee and trainer through the trainer project activity reports (PARs). In addition, programme managers and management seek feedback from the client.
- Robust process and practices are in place with opportunities for formal and informal review through discussions and the quality improvement requests (QIRs) by all staff.
- Ample evidence was provided both by VHG and clients interviewed of feedback opportunities and action taken to improve practice following feedback.
- Clear evidence was provided of the holistic organisational approach taken by VHG, from the initial enquiry call through to the feedback provided to and from the client post-course.

- Additional expertise is contracted to provide objective monitoring of assessment and moderation and internal audit of processes and practices. As management are also trainers this external quality assurance provides VHG confidence that all practices and processes are consistent.

Actions Required and Recommendations

Further actions

The next external evaluation and review will take place in accordance with NZQA's regular scheduling policy and is likely to occur within four years of the date of this report.

Recommendations

There are no recommendation arising from the external evaluation and review.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E eeradmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz